

Thrusting Aside the Tragedy of Tradition

A Barbecue and an Awakening

By A. Bart Horton

KENTUCKY has produced a wonderful galaxy of great men. The Blue Grass State has proudly given to the nation men of magnificent ability in the forum, men of powerful minds and brilliant pens. Among the foremost of these men of today is Johnson N. Camden, not great alone in mind and executive ability, but for a character that is constantly striving for the common good. It was in great part due to this ability that the wonderfully rich treasures of the coal mines in Eastern Kentucky were sent out to the world, for he marshalled the capital that opened the mines and built the railroads into them. Having accomplished this with the highest degree of success, he began to quietly investigate the condition of Kentucky's only other great interest—agriculture. He saw much of her wonderful soil being gradually impoverished, and he saw the heroic efforts of a little band of men struggling against the tragedy of tradition. In common with them he saw the possibilities of making Kentucky one of the great agricultural states of the nation, and to them he extended welcome assistance. His personal energy, active mind, and an open purse became important factors in the fight. The chief obstacle that had been met with was the reluctance of farmers to accept the theories advanced to them. For years they had been living in the lethargy of tradition, obstinately ignoring the progressive ideas founded on the actual results obtained by experiments. Mr. Camden conceived a new method of preaching the doctrines of scientific farming. He extended an invitation to every farmer and to each member of every farmer's family in Kentucky, to visit his beautiful place at Versailles on August 20. He secured the services of the foremost agricultural experts in the United States to be present on that day, and he promised them that feast which is nearest to the Kentuckian heart, a Barbecue. The invitation so splendidly extended, was as splendidly accepted. From early morning vehicles of every description, ancient and modern, streamed into Spring Hill loaded to capacity with farmers and farmer's wives. The interurban service was taxed to its utmost, and everyone who came enjoyed himself for there was entertainment of every description. Mammoth tents gaily decorated provided with every comfort and convenience, burgoo made by a master hand, excellent music, entertaining and instructive addresses, and a treat in itself, a visit to Spring Hill. The ceremonies were held in that part of Mr. Camden's property that lies across the pike from his home. It was a wonderful sight to see those countless thousands gathered there, ladies in their holiday attire, earnest men, and happy children. In order to accommodate the vast crowds there were two speaker's stands. Mr. Camden opened the exercises with an address, which in part was as follows:

"My friends, I give you one and all a most hearty welcome. I am truly delighted to have you here today. I hope you will allow me to tell you briefly what was in my mind when I decided to have this barbecue.

"Always, in thinking of Kentucky, I have a great inspiring vision. I have been in most of the states in the Union, and have traveled in many lands, but I have never beheld a state or empire that has such material possibilities, variety of soil, diversity of products and other blessings as our own beloved state—old Kentucky.

"In ten years' time she will lead every state in the

Union in the production of coal and, what is more, as time goes on will increase the lead and hold it, for she has a greater deposit of high-grade coal than either Pennsylvania or West Virginia. It can also be truly said of Kentucky, as of almost no other country, that if we were absolutely isolated from the rest of the world, we have within ourselves everything necessary for the development of a most advanced and prosperous civilization. We have in abundance the raw materials, iron, coking coal, timber, fire and porcelain clays, phosphate deposits, oil, gas, and an endless variety of mineral wealth, a most varied soil, grazing lands, and a beneficent climate.

FARM LANDS HEART OF STATE

"Yet, while the mineral wealth of the state is a vital thing and means more to us than we can now understand, to my mind the very soul and heart of Kentucky must always dwell in her farm lands and pastures—beautiful, gently rolling, the fairest and greenest the sun shines upon, and fruitful as the delta of the Nile. Kentucky will ever be a great farming state, and the character of her agriculture will determine the character and development of her people. Someone has well said that a people can not be greater or stronger than their soil.

"What I wish to draw attention to today, and to emphasize, is the well recognized fact that in mining, manufacturing, and all productive enterprises, the basic form of wealth is in itself only about 50 percent of the problem involved—the other 50 percent is in organization, which really means co-operation. Granting that our soil would grade No. 1 in fertility—which in many cases it will not do though by intelligent and industrious methods it can be made to—as we now stand, with our imperfect system of soil education, organization and cooperation, we farmers are realizing but half of what we are entitled to from our farms.

"With us the chief obstacle to organization and cooperation, to my mind, is the intense individualism of the Kentuckian. That spirit of self-reliance, indomitable will, and courage to stand alone and all-sufficient, which made him the greatest pioneer the world has ever known, is in a measure a detriment now and blocks his further progress and material development. We are not living in the age of the coonskin cap and long-barrel rifle. Our times are strenuously competitive and the degree of our civilization very complex.

SHOULD ORGANIZE AND COOPERATE

"Realizing this condition, we should set about intelligently, with determination, and our eyes open, to learn the value of organization and cooperation, and to fully understand the destructive quality of unintentionally selfish individualism.

"We must establish team work among ourselves, we must trust one another if we are to prosper further as a people and advance the solidarity of Kentucky interests.

"I have an unbounded faith in the future of Kentucky and in the ability of Kentuckians to do things when their attention and interests are centered upon those things. It is because of my ambition and hope to personally help in quickening this movement that I decided to give this barbecue."

The program of the exercises was as follows:

Speeches from South Platform

JUDGE BARKER, President University of Kentucky, Presiding.

1. Dr. Fred Mutchler, Washington, D. C., Chief in Charge of Demonstration Work in Kentucky.
Subject: Boys' and Girls' Demonstration Work.
2. James C. Caldwell, President First National Bank, Lakefield, Minnesota. Minnesota Member of American Commission to Study Agricultural Cooperation and Rural Finances.
Subject: The Farmer and His Finances.
3. J. W. Newman, Commissioner of Agriculture of Kentucky.
Subject: State Aid.

INTERMISSION

MUSIC

BURGOO

4. Professor C. G. Hopkins, University of Illinois.
Subject: Soil Conservation.
5. Professor Charles J. Brand, Washington, D. C., Assistant in Charge Bureau of Marketing.
Subject: Cooperative Farm Marketing.
6. Prof. T. L. Haecker, Chief of the Dairy School University of Minnesota.
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Speeches from North Platform

PROFESSOR H. H. CHERRY, President State Normal School, Western District, Presiding.

1. R. L. Barnett, Secretary and Treasurer of Kentucky Division of Farmers Educational Cooperative Union of America.
Subject: Farmers' Union.
2. Professor T. J. Coates, State Supervisor of Rural Schools.
Subject: The Farmer and the Country School.
3. E. M. Tousley, of Minnesota, Editor of "Co-operation" and Secretary of Right Relationship League.
Subject: Cooperation.

INTERMISSION

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4. Professor J. H. Kastle, Director Experiment Station, Kentucky.
Subject: Why the Farmer Should be a Chemist.
5. Dr. Bradford Knapp, Washington, D. C., Chief of Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work.
Subject: Farm Extension Work.
6. John S. Sinclair, A. B., LL. B.
Subject: What Cooperative Marketing Has Done for the Old World.
7. George Roberts, Professor of Agronomy, University of Kentucky.
Subject: The Soil—How to Put Value Into It and Get Value Out of It.

There were many distinguished men from Kentucky there; Governor McCreary, Lieutenant Governor McDermott, Rufus VanSant, Stanley Reed, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Kentucky, were among those present. All Woodford County joined Mr. Camden in making this event the greatest epoch in Kentucky's agricultural history, and for days had been assisting him in the preparatory work. The beautiful day, the enormous crowd, the manifest pleasure of everyone amply repaid Mr. Camden for his efforts. From his heart came the words, "Today, I am the happiest man in Kentucky."